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The Racialization and Feminization of Poverty
During the Market Transition
in the Central and Southern Europe

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and
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Societies in transition from an economy integrated by socialist redistribution to an economy integrated by capitalist markets provide an exciting site to study the most interesting theoretical questions about poverty. This paper examines these issues in five countries in Central and Southern Europe, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. During the past decade, there has been dramatic change in these countries. All have moved towards a market economy in some respects. In some of these countries, marketization has been very rapid. At the same time, however, poverty has increased in all of these countries. In this paper, we offer some hypotheses about the relationship between poverty, markets, and ethnicity in these countries and provide some preliminary evidence to examine these hypotheses. We hope that this paper serves as the starting point for a much fuller treatment of these issues.

A. Poverty, Markets, and Redistribution

To define our theoretical puzzle, we draw on the distinction between neoclassical economists and traditional institutionalists. These two positions provide opposing views concerning the origins of poverty. They also recommend strikingly different policies to eliminate poverty. For decades - during the ideological hegemony of traditional institutionalism - the received wisdom among social scientists was that unregulated markets were the primary sources of poverty. Welfare redistribution by governments was necessary to reduce poverty (Polanyi 1944; Townsend 1970) whether it was defined in either relative or absolute terms. During the past few decades, however, neoclassical economists began to question these assumptions. They argued that unconstrained markets generate rapid economic growth that eventually benefits the bottom of social hierarchy. Neoclassical economists believe that welfare redistribution offers no cure for poverty; it only suppresses the symptoms and prolongs the disease. Governmental welfare redistribution locks the poor into welfare dependency and usually supports the middle class because it does not reach those in extreme poverty anyway. Thus, poverty will be reproduced indefinitely unless the poor take responsibility for their own welfare (Hayek 1944, 1960; Stigler 1970; Friedman and Friedman 1980).

Kuznets (1955) offered a theory that was consistent with the neoclassical position, but posed the relationship between economic growth and social inequality in a more complex way. He analyzed income distribution data over a long period of time using countries with different levels of economic development. He concluded that income inequality increased during an economic take-off, but that inequality declined after economic growth reached a certain level. Thus, the relationship between economic growth and social inequality can be well described

by an inverted U-shaped curve. Assuming that free markets produce the fastest possible economic growth, especially in highly developed economies, Kuznets's theory suggests that the expansion of markets may initially increase inequality. By implication, poverty, at least in relative terms, will also increase. Even an increase in absolute poverty is not unimaginable from this theoretical perspective. Eventually, however, free markets will correct the socially undesirable effects of economic growth. Markets will reduce inequality, thereby reducing not only absolute, but also relative poverty.

In a recent comparative study of inequality and poverty, Lal and Myint (1996) formulated the question of the relationship between equality, poverty, and economic growth in a particularly clear and provocative way. They found that income distributions in the core capitalist countries of the world during the past quarter of century did not follow the pattern observed by Kuznets. In particular, inequalities in Western Europe and North America increased during the last decades of the twentieth century. Lal and Myint (1966) found that economic growth did not necessarily reduce inequality, but they did find evidence that economic growth reduced absolute poverty. Thus, free markets and economic growth may produce greater inequality, but they may reduce absolute poverty.

B. Poverty and the Underclass

Our central analytic issue is whether economic growth and marketization eliminate absolute poverty. We realize that social inequality is a serious problem, but we focus on underclass formation, and therefore, on absolute poverty. Thus, we arrive at the problem of the tricky and often debated definition of the underclass. We return to the concept as it was originally used in the 1960s and early 1970s. As far as we can tell, the term underclass was coined by Myrdal (1962, 1964), who used it to designate the unique position of the long-term poor, who were not benefiting from the post-war economic boom. These individuals were locked into long-term structural unemployment because they did not have, and could not acquire, the education and skills demanded in a diversified economy. We believe that William Julius Wilson (1978) intended to use the term this way (Aponte 1990), though he may not have been entirely clear, as he sometimes shifted between an economic and behavioral definition of the underclass. Here, we simply highlight that Wilson expanded Myrdal's notion of underclass in useful ways, by moving away from an economically deterministic understanding of the underclass and by bringing the issue of racism into his analysis. Drawing on Wilson's innovation, our own perspective, inspired by Bourdieu, combines a focus on the objective problems of structural unemployment with an analysis of the subjective classificatory struggles

of ethnicity and gender to predict when sharp distinctions are drawn between the "hopelessly poor" and the "deserving poor".

Thus, we define the underclass in terms of the objective life chances of its members. The underclass is constituted by those individuals who a) are locked into long-term unemployment, b) are likely to remain unemployed and poor for their entire life because of their lack of education and marketable skills, and c) whose children are likely to be trapped in similar social positions. These individuals are separated from the rest of society by a caste-like cleavage; members of the underclass become the "untouchables", the "undeserving poor", or the "no-hopers." In the next section, we argue that an underclass is likely to form in conjunction with the presence of certain social characteristics, and in particular, ethnicity or gender.

C. Underclass Formation around Ethnicity and Gender?

All evidence at our disposal indicates that during the transition from socialist redistribution to capitalist markets both absolute and relative poverty increased. Within this empirical context, we formulate our hypotheses by drawing on the neoclassical and institutionalist perspectives. As market institutions become consolidated in former post-communist countries, will absolute poverty decline, following a "Lal and Myint" curve, as neoclassical theory predicts, or will the poor reproduce themselves unless the government intervenes as institutionalists predict?

We propose a novel solution to this debate: It depends! Whether poverty will be reproduced under the conditions of well-functioning markets depends on the social characteristics of the cleavages that separate the poor from the not-so-poor and on the social characteristics of markets. We focus on two mechanisms - racialization and feminization - that can reproduce poverty. Poverty may become racialized or feminized when ethnic minorities or women are overrepresented among the poor. This overrepresentation is a necessary, but insufficient condition. Racialization and feminization occur when a social phenomenon - here poverty - is attributed to supposedly ascribed characteristics of actors. If the racialization or feminization of poverty is successful, the cleavage between the poor and the not-so-poor becomes rigid and social actors perceive this cleavage as natural, created by the "laws of nature." The outcome is that the resultant poverty is durable and long term. It is likely to be transmitted to the next generation.

Social scientists who interpret this phenomenon have to navigate between the Scylla of "objectivism" and the Charybdis of "subjectivism". Objectivism in this context would mean that a particular ethnicity or gender is locked into poverty

because of certain objective, unalterable attributes of that ethnic group or gender. Subjectivism on the other hand would imply that ethnicity and gender have nothing to do with poverty; the fact that the poor are ethnic minorities or women is purely a subjective assessment by social actors.

Our conceptualization lies between these two positions. With respect to the concentration of ethnic minorities in poverty, we argue that the racialization of poverty is the outcome of a classificatory struggle. If this classificatory struggle is successful, a social phenomenon - poverty - is presented as if it were racial, not social, and therefore, as if it were genetically and biologically determined. From this perspective, racialization arises from a strategy used by the positively privileged ethnic group to keep themselves out of the category "poor" and/or to blame the poor for their own poverty at the same time. ("I cannot be poor, since I am not African-American or Gypsy" or "They are poor since they are African-Americans or Gypsies. It is their biological heritage or culture that makes them poor.") Our conceptualization of racialization is similar to Miles's position (1982). He argues that social actors in structurally similar social, economic, or geographic positions to ethnic minorities are likely to use race to separate themselves from these minorities. Understood this way, racialization implies a classificatory struggle: The social actors who are involved in struggles to define poverty as a racial issue pursue a specific agenda.

As actors pursue this agenda, of course, they construct reality. Nevertheless, they do so in reference to reality. In the absence of an ethnicity that is amenable to racialization, attempts to racialize a cleavage will fail. There are indeed some dispositions that increase the likelihood of successful racialization. These dispositions are historically variable: At one time they may be sufficient to create a sharp cleavage between the poor and the not-so-poor; at another time, they may not serve this purpose. For example, being Jewish may have been an ethnicity around which to racialize poverty a hundred years ago in Eastern Europe, but it may no longer be possible to do so. Today, being Jewish may be an ethnicity from which a privileged status can be constructed. Thus, in the social construction of reality there must be some objective point of reference that can be used, though how this objective reality is used is a product of struggles between classifiers and classified.

In this paper, we focus on Roma ethnicity. We believe that race is the product of classificatory struggles, thus, a) no assumptions should be made about common ancestry; b) empirically it is untenable that race (or ethnicity) can be determined with certainty by anthropological characteristics (like darkness of the skin, facial characteristics, color of the hair, or eyes), c) therefore, the assumption

made even by many non-racist researchers (Kemeny 1976), namely, that all members of the society can agree with absolute certainty about who is member of any particular racial or ethnic group (for example, the Roma) is untenable. Who is Roma, Jewish, Hungarian, or Romanian is a result of classificatory struggles that involve both those who are classified this way and those who try to classify them. Thus, we argue that the object of our study should be the varieties of classificatory systems, not the "correct" way to determine who belongs to which group. This understanding of Roma ethnicity is closest to Okely's work (1983), and also similar to the positions of Stewart (1997), Lucassen (1991), or Pronai (1995).

Empirical research conducted in Central and Southern Europe makes it very clear that estimates of the size of the Roma population depends on how the classifiers define ethnicity. Different systems of classifications have been used in different countries and in different studies: a) respondents were classified as Roma if they spoke the Romany language (this is what most censuses did before 1980); b) respondents were asked to identify themselves as belonging to Gypsy "nationality" (most censuses asked this question after the fall of communism); c) respondents were asked to identify the ethnic background of their ancestors (Szelényi and Treiman survey, 1992); d) experts or jurors (school teachers, headmasters, social workers, doctors, the police) were asked to identify Gypsies in particular communities (Kemény 1976, Kemény, Havas, and Kertesi 1995; Tomova 1995, Zamfir and Zamfir 1995); e) interviewers were asked whether they believed that respondents were definitely or possibly Roma (Szelényi and Treiman 1992, Hungarian survey; Szonda Ipsos 1997; Hungarian Central Statistical Office 1993).

The size and composition of the Roma population in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia varies depending on how the Roma population is estimated. If individuals who self-identify as Roma are used as the benchmark, other estimates of the Roma population can be compared to the estimate obtained by using self-identification in the following way (these are rough figures, since estimates of the size and proportion of Roma population varies across countries). If the number of individuals who self-identify as Roma equals 1, then:

the number of individuals whose native language is Romany is 0.5,

the number of individuals reporting Roma ancestors is 3,

the number of Roma reported by expert judges is 5,

the number that interviewers identify as definitely Roma is 6 or 7, and

the number that interviewers identify as definitely or probably Roma is 10.

Thus, estimates of the Roma population vary between 0.5 and 10, or about twenty-fold (Kemény Havas, Kertesi 1995; Szelényi and Treiman 1992; Szonda Ipsos 1997).

Similarly, feminization of poverty occurs when women are concentrated in poverty and when biological, not social causes are proposed as the explanation of this concentration. When poverty is feminized, it becomes viewed as inherent: Young women with low intelligence and high fertility have many children, thereby creating a cycle of poverty. This image is often linked to what are assumed to be women's natural role in child raising activities. Becker (1991:37-48), for example, argues that child raising activities are biologically easier for women than men. As a consequence, he argues that it is rational for women to specialize in such activities. Poor women with many children are viewed as victims of biological processes of fertility and childbearing. Thus, the "welfare" mother is treated as a quasi-biological construction. In a process analogous to racialization, when poverty is feminized, it is presented as if it were a naturally occurring attribute of sex, that is, women's biological capacities, instead of as a social construction.

Again, we try to find a position between objectivism and subjectivism. While there are obviously some objective biological bases for women's role in reproduction, much of women's concentration in poverty is related to women's inferior market position with respect to men and to women's greater social responsibilities for child raising. There is some indication that in the United States, some women, and in particular, some female ethnic minorities, form an underclass (Casper, McLanahan, and Garfield 1994; Rodgers 1996; Stack 1976). Such women tend to become single mothers at a young age and for them poverty is not merely a life-cycle phenomena. They do not cease to be poor when their children reach adulthood, and their children are also more likely to be poor and remain poor. For our purposes, Central Europe is again a strategic research site - this time because poverty appears not to be feminized, at least not in the same way as in the United States.

During the transition from socialist redistribution to capitalist markets, the racialization and feminization of poverty followed different trajectories. Under socialism, Roma experienced discrimination. Still, however, they did not constitute an underclass -- though they were the most underprivileged group in these societies -- because the socialist economy operated with full employment. Kornai (1980), with great accuracy, called the socialist redistributive economy an "economy of shortage." While economies based on market capitalism suffer from cyclical crises of over-production - they have a chronic problem of excessive supply - socialist redistributive economies represent their mirror images. They suffer from chronic

shortages, even with respect to the allocation of labor. Threatened with chronic labor shortages, socialist societies institute laws that require individuals to be employed. Under these circumstances, there was sufficient demand for labor to draw Roma into the labor market, in addition to the legal compulsion requiring Roma to be employed. Thus, under socialism, Roma had access to a steady cash inflow for the first time in their history. Gypsies were employed where labor was in the most demand - precisely in the most privileged sectors of the economy, steel, mining, and construction, though racial prejudice slotted them into the most underprivileged positions. When socialism crumbled, these privileged bastions of the socialist economy were the hardest hit: what used to be the most privileged sectors of the economy became the least privileged ones. Thus, with the transition to capitalist markets, the Gypsies became the poorest of the poor. With the collapse of the mining, steel, and construction industries, Roma were the first to lose their jobs and had no hope for finding new employment (Barany 1994; Gheorghe 1991). This process is similar to the effect of de-industrialization in creating poor, Black ghettos in major American cities. De-industrialization in former socialist countries, however, has a much greater impact on the creation of a Roma underclass, because socialist ideology idealized those sectors in which the genuine proletariat, "the workers with hammers in hand", labored! Socialist planners were obsessed with "department one" and with the "production of the means of production" in a way that was unprecedented in market economies. As a result, when socialism collapsed, the Roma population moved out of the underprivileged stratum of the privileged economic sectors and into the underclass of post-communist society.

The Roma have become geographically isolated as well. One unusual pattern of geographic isolation in Central and Southern Europe are rural, ethnic ghettos. Although African-American ghettos in the U.S. are urban phenomena, Roma ghettos are found in villages. Rural ghettos are unique not only in comparison to the United States, but are also novel historical developments in Central and Southern Europe. Traditionally, the Roma minority - if settled, and in the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian empire it tended to be settled - lived in Gypsy settlements next to villages inhabited by ethnic majorities. During the past several decades, there was a dramatic ecological change in rural social spaces. The ethnic majority population began to escape small, isolated villages and moved into centers of rural growth or cities. The vacated spaces were filled by Roma, who were able to move out of the Roma settlements and into the villages. The housing conditions of Roma improved dramatically when they relocated, as they often moved out of mud huts in the settlements. Nevertheless, the flight of the peasant population from these isolated villages was disastrous for the Roma. Peasants in the villages mediated between the rural Roma poor and the rest of society. Peasants consumed the services and products of the Roma. Rural Gypsies were hired as entertainers,

as musicians at weddings and funerals, and as seasonal laborers. Peasants also bought goods that Gypsies produced. The out migration of the peasants was, in many ways, analogous to the out migration of the Black middle class from urban Black neighborhoods in the United States. Historically, rural Roma lived in an asymmetrical, but symbiotic relationship with the peasants who belonged to the ethnic majority. When they lost these social ties, they were turned into a ghetto poor. Though the ethnic dimension is different, this process of the creation of a ghetto is similar to the way in which poor African-Americans were turned into an underclass because of the loss of their middle class.

Nevertheless, the overlap between rural residence, poverty, and ethnicity is not complete. Gypsy ghettos are also visible in the cities of Central and Southern Europe. These ghettos of urban Roma are created by a similar process, when those who are doing better economically escape the Roma neighborhoods. In addition, as Tarkowska (1998) indicates, poverty is prevalent in rural regions among the population of ethnic majorities in post-communist societies, because these regions experience little economic growth and suffer from the collapse of socialist state farms. Tarkowska argues that an underclass is formed if its members are socially, economically, and geographically isolated from the rest of the society. By her criteria, the Roma qualify as an underclass.

Like the social condition of the Roma, women's position has been changing during the transition to capitalist markets. Their trajectories, however, differ dramatically. Women were also discriminated against in socialism. Unlike Gypsies who ended up at the bottom of the privileged economic sectors, however, women were locked into the underprivileged sectors of the socialist economy, though they were allowed to climb the social ladder in these sectors. Women were therefore substantially overrepresented in the tertiary sector, the orphan of the socialist redistributive economy. They were also excluded from the royal path to power and privilege: Communist party membership. Thus, they frequently compensated for their underrepresentation in the party, for their shortage of political capital, with higher levels of education. Indeed, by the end of the socialist epoch, women tended to be better educated than men. Though well-educated women often held relatively poorly paid and low prestige jobs in the tertiary sector, they were also employed in reasonably high positions in banking, insurance, advertising, tourism, and similar industries. In this respect, the market transition affected women in very different ways than Roma. When the transition to market capitalism occurred, women were concentrated in the sector that experienced the most growth. Furthermore, Communist party membership lost its prestige, so this form of political capital in which men were privileged lost its value, while education became more important. Well-educated women were not threatened by unemployment, and often they found

themselves in good jobs with highly desired skills (Fodor 1997). As a result, at least in the early stages of market transition, there is little evidence of the feminization of poverty. In fact, the transition from socialist redistribution to capitalist markets benefits women, at least temporarily. As marketization proceeds, however, women's relative advantage may be eroded. Young men are rapidly entering the tertiary sector. It may take less than a generation for women to lose this relative advantage that accrued to them virtually by accident as a result of market transition.

While in the advanced Western capitalist economies, racialization and feminization are two parallel forces that accentuate the boundaries between the poor and the not-so-poor, during the epochal transition from socialism to capitalism, we hypothesize that racialization, but not feminization, creates an underclass. Thus, while racialization may prevent a long-term reduction in absolute poverty and may be apparent in the early stages of transition, feminization may not have the same effect or may take place at a much later stage in the transition.

This difference between the dynamics of feminization and racialization highlights two crucial issues. First, the feminization of poverty is not inevitable and is a social, not a biological construction. Second, it illustrates that both the institutionalist and the neoclassical theory suggest that markets have a singular effect, though the theories differ in the way that they characterize this effect. The institutionalist theorists argue that markets create a permanent underclass, while neoclassical theorists argue that they eliminate this type of poverty. Neither position, however, incorporates the historical trajectories of markets and, therefore, neither position captures the relative advantages of the socialist legacy for women that are specific to a transition from socialist redistribution to capitalist markets.

D. Transition to Market Economy: the "Laboratory" to examine the Effects of Marketization on Poverty

Societies in transition from socialist redistribution to capitalist markets provide an ideal site to consider hypotheses about the relationship between markets, inequality, and poverty. In these post-communist countries of Central and Southern Europe, there is an ideal, almost "laboratory"-like situation. Comparisons between these countries are a powerful tool to examine our hypotheses concerning the interactive effects of marketization, ethnicity, and poverty, because these countries vary along these dimensions. In terms of economic development and degree of market penetration, Hungary and Poland are more advanced than Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria. Poland is an ethnically homogeneous society, while Hungary is a country with a substantial Roma minority. Thus, the comparison of these two countries will

show whether the presence of an ethnic minority that is concentrated in poverty creates an underclass. The comparison of Hungary with Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria (all of which have at least one ethnic minority) will suggest how much impact marketization has on the creation of an underclass. If neoclassical theory is correct, there should be no underclass in Hungary. If Roma poverty is similar in these four countries, our "revisionist" institutionalist theory will be supported.

There is another interesting comparison between the ethnically heterogeneous countries. Hungary has a single ethnic minority, while Romania and Slovakia have two minorities: Gypsies, who are concentrated in poverty and Hungarians, who are not. Thus, a comparison between Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary will help to explain how the presence of a second minority, which apparently has no elective affinity with poverty, affects the growth of a Roma underclass. Bulgaria falls into a unique third category. It is a multi-ethnic society, in which more than one ethnicity is overrepresented among the poor (Roma, Pomaks, and Turks are concentrated in poverty). With respect to our hypotheses about racialization, we expect to find little evidence of an underclass in Poland because the Roma population is small.

Thus, we hypothesize that there will be differences in the degree of underclass formation depending on how many ethnicities exist in a country and how many ethnicities have an elective affinity with poverty. We hypothesize that: a) if there is one ethnic group that is overrepresented among the poor, underclass development will be strong; b) if there are multiple groups over represented among the poor, underclass formation may weaker, since classificatory struggles using race to separate the poor and the not-so-poor cannot focus on a single group; c) if there are two ethnic groups, one that is concentrated in poverty and one that is not, the racialization of poverty may be especially strong. The ethnic group that is concentrated in poverty will be blamed, with particular force, for their own poverty, since the non-poor ethnic group will be cited as an example that ethnic minorities are not necessarily poor. If our hypotheses are correct, the racialization of poverty will be especially strong in Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania.

The comparisons between these countries also address our hypotheses about the feminization of poverty. Feminization may be more advanced when a) a racially defined underclass is less developed, because classificatory struggles can use only gender, not race, to mark poverty; and b) if marketization is more advanced, it may overcome the temporary advantage women had in the early stages of market transition. Thus, the feminization of poverty in these countries may increase with marketization. Consequently, the feminization of poverty will be strongest in Poland, which is relatively homogeneous ethnically and where marketization is the

farthest underway, followed by Hungary, where marketization is also well underway, but which has a sizeable Roma minority.

Hypotheses for a comparative study of racialization and feminization of poverty

Marketization	Ethnically homogeneous	Ethnic group(s) likely to be poor: One group Several groups		One group in poverty, other not in poverty
High	Poland: no racialization, but feminization	Hungary: strong racialization; medium feminization		
Medium				Slovakia: strong racialization, some feminization
Low			Bulgaria: medium racialization, little feminization	Romania: strong racialization; little feminization

E. The evidence from Central and Southern Europe

1/ Poverty

The comparison of poverty and inequality under socialism and post-communism is a complex task. Examining poverty was a taboo in communist societies (Ladányi 1998; Tarkowska 1998; Warzywoda-Kruszynska and Grotowka-Leder, 1996:68). In the reform oriented countries, such as Hungary and Poland, data were collected on low income groups during the socialist epoch, but this evidence is fragmentary (Bokor 1987; Ferge 1969; Frackiewicz 1983; Jarosz 1984; Kemény 1972; Tulli 1978; Tymowski 1973). Despite these incomplete data, scholars agree that both absolute and relative increased substantially after the breakdown of state socialism (Cornia 1994; Kornai 1996; Ladányi 1998; Magyari, Magyari-Vincze, Popescu, and Rotariu 1998; Milanovic 1994; Radicova and Vasecka 1998; Kornai 1996; Milanovic 1994; Mitev 1998; Tarkowska 1998).

The causes of the increase in poverty and prospects for its amelioration are less obvious. Is an increase in poverty the price of transition? Is it the price societies pay for radical, but delayed, economic transformation (Mitev 1998)? Or, stated more theoretically, is there an inverted U-shaped curve describing the relationship between poverty and marketization during the post-communist transition? If so, then absolute poverty may increase during the early stages of marketization, but may decline as the economy grows and as fully developed market institutions restructure the economy. The existence of an inverted U-shaped curve of poverty during post-communist market transition would be consistent with Lal and Myint's theory of the relationship between economic growth and poverty. So far, there is no evidence of a Kuznets's curve of income distribution in post-communist transitional economies. As the economies of Hungary and Poland grow, inequality remains high and may even increase. Still, it is possible that there is a "Lal and Myint" curve: absolute poverty may be declining despite high inequality. Thus, the top income decile may earn an increasingly larger percentage of the total income, while the bottom decile may earn an increasingly smaller percentage of the total income, though those in the bottom income decile may still increase their absolute income. For example, Polish researchers report what appears to be a decline in the proportion of population under the poverty line, the turning point being somewhere around 1994-95 (Tarkowska 1998; Beskid 1997).

Although most scholars agree that poverty increased during first five years of post-communism, estimates of poverty vary substantially depending on how poverty is defined. One approach is to define poverty using a pre-established per capita income as a threshold level. Those who use this approach tend to produce a lower estimate of poverty, though the growth of the population falling below poverty line is substantial. Kornai (1996), for example, defines as "poor" those who earn \$4.00 a day or less, his estimates of poor in some of these countries are the following:

Table 1. Poverty measured by absolute income (\$4.00 per day)

Percent of the population below the poverty line		
Country	1987-88	1993-94
Bulgaria	2	33
Hungary	<1	3
Poland	6	19
Romania	6	39
Slovakia	0	<1

Milanovic (1994) arrives at similar conclusions by using the monthly per capita income of \$120 as the poverty line. He argues that the number of poor people in the region climbed from 8 million to 58 million between 1989 and 1993. The rate of poverty has increased in Poland and the Balkan from 5% to 17%, in the Baltic states from 1% to 30%, in Central Europe (Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) from .5% to 1%.

Cornia (1994), on the other hand, measures poverty in relative terms: as those earning less than a certain percentage of the median income of the given country. Using such measures the rate of growth of the population under the poverty line may seem less dramatic, but the actual proportion of poor is higher. Here are his estimates:

Table 2. Estimates of poverty (in % of the population)

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Bulgaria (45% of 1989 average wage)	.	13.8	52.1	53.6	57.0
Hungary (40% of 1989 average wage)	14.5	.	19.4	.	.
Poland (40% of 1989 average wage)	24.7	43.1	41.2	43.7	.
Romania (45% of 1989 average wage)	33.9	21.4	29.7	51.5	.
Slovakia (40% of 1989 average wage)	5.8	9.4	27.7	34.1	.

As far as we know, the only survey with data for most of the Central and Southern European countries that used the same methodology on a large, random sample of the population is the study, "Social Stratification in Eastern Europe after 1989", conducted by Szelényi and Treiman (1992). Because of the methodology, it provides the most comparable data for these countries. Following the conventions of the literature and for reasons of comparability, they defined "poor" as those whose per capita household income was below 50% of the national median. This poverty line is a relative measure, because its monetary value differs in each country depending on the national income level. We present detailed data on

poverty in 1992 in Table 3. The results are consistent with Cornia's findings: The differences among the countries lies by and large in the same direction in Tables 2 and 3, although the degree of difference among the countries is smaller in Table 3. Thus, Bulgaria and Poland have the highest rates of poverty, followed by Slovakia and Hungary. Since the base here is 1992, not 1989 income, the poverty rate is lower. (In all countries, real incomes declined substantially between 1989 and 1992, and the decline may have been the sharpest in Bulgaria and Romania. This may account for the astonishingly high poverty rate found by Cornia in these two countries.)

Table 3. Poverty Rates for women and men, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, 1992. Population between 20 and 69 years old (percentages, with N's in parentheses)

The extent of poverty within:	Bulgaria	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Whole Population	12.6% (567)	9.0% (422)	13.5% (421)	10.9% (500)
Men	11.0 (237)	7.8 (150)	12.9 (205)	9.2 (202)
Women	14.1 (330)	10.1 (208)	14.1 (216)	12.6 (298)
Economically Active*	10.9 (361)	7.5 (205)	12.7 (309)	9.8 (343)
Men	9.5 (162)	7.0 (106)	12.6 (168)	9.2 (175)
Women	12.3 (199)	8.0 (99)	12.8 (141)	10.3 (168)
Retired**	15.6 (137)	8.2 (76)	13.8 (62)	8.7 (63)
Men	15.5 (57)	10.2 (38)	14.6 (28)	7.6 (19)
Women	15.6 (80)	6.8 (38)	13.6 (34)	9.4 (44)
On Maternity leave/ at home (women only)	25.5 (49)	27.1 (67)	26.2 (39)	32.3 (81)
Ratio - Female to Male poverty (Whole population)	1.28	1.29	1.09	1.37

Note: N for the whole sample population of Bulgaria=4,485; Hungary = 3,987; Poland = 3,120; Slovakia = 4577.

The "poor" are defined as those whose per capita household income does not exceed 50% of the median national per capita income.

* Economically Active includes those working and looking for work.

** The Retired also includes those on long-term sick leave.

Source: "Social Stratification in Eastern Europe After 1989." Szélenyi and Treiman 1992.

2/ Ethnicity

In this paper, we focus on the Roma, because they are the single largest ethnic group found in the countries of Central and Southern Europe that is likely to be concentrated in poverty. According to Davidova (1995), the Roma population of Europe during the mid 1990s was about 8 million; perhaps over 5.5 million lived in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Macedonia and Bulgaria. An additional 700,000 Roma lived in the other countries of the Central, Southern and East European region (Albania, other successor states of Yugoslavia, Russia and the Ukraine). Thus, almost 80 percent of Europe's Roma population can be found in the former socialist states of Europe. Aside from these countries, Spain and France are the only European countries with a substantial Roma population (750,000 and 340,000 respectively.) Davidova's estimates are rather conservative, so her figures may actually understate the size of the Roma population in the region:

Table 4. Estimates of the size of the Roma population in Central and Southern Europe

Country	1950s-1960s	Minimum, 1990s	Maximum 1990s
Czech Republic	(Czechoslovakia) 200-224,000	250,000	300,000
Slovakia		480,000	520,000
Bulgaria	230,000	600,000	700,000
Hungary	190,000	550,000	600,000
Poland	30,000	50,000	60,000
Macedonia	(all Yugoslavia) 85,000	220,000	260,000
Serbia		400,000	450,000
Romania	104,216	1,800,000	2,500,000

While the estimates for the 1950s and 1960s for Yugoslavia and Romania are highly dubious, it is reasonable to argue that the Roma population increased about three-fold over the past three to four decades. This population growth can be attributed solely to high levels of fertility and declining rates of mortality, because international migration was not a major factor in the growth of the Roma population.

Although it is likely that Roma are concentrated in poverty, there is very little statistical evidence to support this assertion. Szelényi and Treiman's study (1992) again provides one of the few sources. Table 5 below displays their findings for Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovakia, for individuals reporting Roma ancestors (about 2.5-3.0 percent of the respondents). These data support the claim that Roma are concentrated among the poor, the uneducated, and rural residents. It also shows that they tend to have large families. Since Szelényi and Treiman used a non-stratified, proportional random sample of the population, the "N" for the Gypsy minorities is small, which makes the relatively consistent results across these countries even more remarkable.

Table 5. Social characteristics of the Roma population in comparison with the non-Roma pauper population and the general population¹

Country	Ethnicity	Number of children under 18	Rural residents	Less than primary education	Unemployed men, 20-65
Bulgaria	Roma	2.5	53.3	46.9	46.0
	Pauper	1.8	45.9	20.4	19.9
	All respond.	.8	39.8	15.0	12.1
Hungary	Roma	2.4	43.2	37.9	44.2
	Pauper	1.8	41.4	18.6	20.0
	All respond.	.7	32.5	14.1	13.3
Slovakia	Roma	2.3	43.9	30.5	27.6
	Pauper	2.1	53.8	8.1	10.6
	All respond.	.9	47.5	8.9	6.1

¹ The Szelényi and Treiman Slovak survey grossly underestimates the percentage of unemployed - at the time of the survey it was twice as large as the study indicates. We assume that Gypsy unemployment is underestimated to the same extent.

3/ Gender

We can use Széleányi and Treiman's survey to consider the extent of the feminization of poverty as well. As discussed above, their measure of poverty is a relative one. They defined the poor as those whose per capita household income did not exceed 50 percent of the median national per capita household income in 1992. Since they use per capita household income, as opposed to individual earnings and benefits, the gender gap reflects differential poverty rates among single people. This is not only the conventional definition, but meshes well with social reality in Central and Southern Europe, because approximately 40% of the population over 15 years of age is single at any one point in time (Statistical Yearbook of Hungary 1990)². Table 3 presents the gender difference in poverty, using this measure. Table 6 presents another measure of poverty, "potential poverty rates," which we define as less than 50% of the national median individual income. This indicator shows how poverty would be gendered if all adults had to make ends meet on their own income - a real threat for many people, given the high rates of divorce. The two measures together, we believe provide a more differentiated picture of gendered poverty in the region, than either measure along. The last lines in Tables 3 and 6 presents the ratio of female to male poverty.

Tables 3 and 6 illustrate that both the level of poverty and the gender gap differs across countries. In Poland, there is a high poverty rate, but little gender difference. In contrast, in Slovakia, the poverty rate is smaller, but the gender gap is larger. The poverty rate is higher in Bulgaria than in Hungary, but they have about the same size gender gap. A poverty ratio of 1.25 would rank around the middle of the distribution in Casper et al.'s eight-country study (1994:594): about the same as in Germany and Canada, lower than in the US and Australia, but higher than in Sweden, the Netherlands or Italy.

² Whether or not income is distributed equally within households is another question. No reliable information is present about this issue.

Table 6. Potential poverty rates for men and women in five countries, 1992. Population between 20-69 years of age

	Bulgaria		Hungary		Poland		Slovakia	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
WHOLE POPULATION	6.1	8.1	3.3	9.4	6.7	14.8	1.6	10.8
GENDER RATIO	1.32		2.8		2.2		6.75	

Note: N for whole populations of Bulgaria=4485; Czech Republic=5054; Hungary=3987; Poland=3121; Slovakia=4577.

As Table 3 shows, the gender gap in poverty is not limited to either the economically active or the retired: rates are quite similar in both categories. Poverty, even feminized poverty, does not have an "elderly" face in Eastern Europe; the retired are generally not worse off than those who are active in the labor force. Rather, the typical poor family consists of a wage earner father and a mother on maternity leave (or, less often, keeping house) - as indicated by the high rates of home makers living in poor households.

Women's plight is particularly apparent when we examine "potential poverty" rates in Table 6, which reflects differences in earning capacities in the labor market and illustrate women's dependence on a male breadwinner. The potential poverty rates in Table 6 are all higher than the actual poverty rates in Table 3, and dramatically so in Slovakia.

In sum, then, these figures show that the gender gap in poverty exists in Central and Eastern Europe, even though levels of state welfare spending as well as women's labor force participation rates are particularly high. This suggests that to understand gendered poverty, we must go beyond mere labor force participation rates and must examine, as Smith (1984) suggested, women's integration into the changing economy. The sizeable gender gap in poverty also suggests that women living alone or with children, even when they are working and receiving social benefits, are perhaps the most vulnerable group in post communist societies. In general, women's poverty in Eastern Europe has few of the "welfare mother" or "state-dependence" associations; instead it is related to the social organization of a system of production where women's wages are insufficient to support themselves and/or a family. Thus, as we suggested, the concentration of women in poverty may not be as noticeable in some of these countries in Eastern and Central Europe as

elsewhere, because of the socialist legacy that provided women with some comparative advantages, though poverty does seem to be gendered. Our more specific hypotheses, that women are more likely to be concentrated in poverty; in the more marketized countries seems to hold, at least at a general level. Taken together, Tables 3 and 6 suggest that women may be less concentrated in poverty in Bulgaria, as we predicted. The small gender difference in poverty in Poland, however, is somewhat anomalous in terms of our hypotheses.

4/ The Interaction Between Ethnicity and Gender

Furthermore, not all women benefit from the legacies of communist "exploitative" emancipation. We argue that a significant bifurcation is emerging not only between the genders but also among women themselves. We expect this dual opportunity structure to be strongly associated with ethnicity, especially among the Roma. The interaction between gender and race create a double disadvantage for Roma women. Table 7 presents our evidence. Almost half of the Roma, while only around 10% of the non-Roma population of the three countries for which data on ethnicity are available, live in poverty. But Roma women are even more likely than Roma men to be poor - by less than only 10% in Hungary, but by almost 40% in Bulgaria. Thus, we argue that one of the characteristics of the newly emerging poverty in Eastern Europe is that important differences are created among women. This bifurcation, we propose, is structured along racial lines: women at the very bottom of the social hierarchy are minority women, and in particular, those of Roma ethnicity.

Table 7. Poverty rates among the Roma population in three countries, 1992.
Population between 20-57 years old

	Bulgaria		Hungary		Slovakia	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
ROMA	40.4	55.3	41.4	44.3	32.1	35.8
NON-ROMA	10.0	12.5	7.0	10.6	9.4	13.3
RATIO FOR ROMA	1.37		1.07		1.11	
N (ROMA)	61	46	42	49	57	48

Thus, we argue that while most women collected significant resources during the state socialist era, minority women could not do this, because they had been treated as a "welfare problem" even during the communist regime. To summarize our propositions then: we argued that (1) feminized poverty is Eastern Europe is not

primarily the result of the growth in the rate of single mothers or the insufficiency of welfare checks, rather it is due to women's inferior position in the labor markets. However, (2) we added that women's poverty, on average, is not the kind of hopeless destitution experienced by women on welfare in the United States, because East European women had gained some resources in the communist era, which turned out to be marketable during the transition to a market economy. But, not all women can do this: (3) minority women, devoid of the above-mentioned resources are the most vulnerable social group, they are thrust to the fringes of society and experience downward mobility as no other segment of the society.

F. Conclusions

We use this theoretical perspective and the available evidence from Central Europe and Southern Europe to make these hypotheses:

1/ If the neoclassical position is correct, the relationship between economic growth and poverty will follow an inverted U curve. As marketization proceeds, poverty will increase for awhile, but eventually the benefits of economic growth generated by the market economy will trickle down to the poor, decreasing absolute poverty.

2/ By incorporating the perspective of Mitev (1998) and Radicova and Vasecka (1998) into the neoclassical framework, it is possible to argue that a gradualist strategy of market transition may initially delay the growth of poverty, but when poverty begins to increase, it may actually reach higher levels than under conditions of "shock therapy." Thus, we can imagine two inverted U curves with slightly different shapes and heights, depending on whether the transition was gradual or sudden. In the case of shock therapy, we expect rapid growth of poverty early in transition. The height of the U curve, however, may be relatively low, and the curve may decline rapidly after peaking. Such a curve may describe well the dynamics of poverty in Poland and Hungary: It increased rapidly right after 1989, but peaked as early as 1993, and declined gradually in the past five years. In countries that followed gradualist policies (Romania and Bulgaria), the growth of poverty may have been smaller and slower during the early years of the transition (in Romania poverty probably declined right after 1989), but poverty continued to increase after it began to decline in Poland and Hungary. Furthermore, in Romania and Bulgaria, absolute poverty may have been higher than where shock therapy was implemented.

3/ We also hypothesize that the presence of an ethnic minority affects the shape of the U curve. Ethnicity may be used to launch successful struggles to racialize poverty,

and therefore, to create an underclass. We argue that the racialization of poverty is likely to occur when as the U curve begins to decline. Without racialization, poverty may decline monotonically. With racialization, this decline may stop if an underclass emerges that reproduces itself and consequently perpetuates absolute poverty. While we do not expect that feminization will have strong effects at this stage of marketization, it is possible that feminization and racialization may have analogous effects on the shape of the U curve describing the relationship between marketization and poverty.

We can summarize the different ways that poverty is constructed under the conditions of the market transition in Central Europe. How does racialization and feminization alter the theoretical controversy between traditional institutionalist and neo-classical economists? If there is an ethnic minority in a society that has an elective affinity with poverty, there will be a tendency towards the formation of an underclass, depending upon the outcome of the classificatory struggle. Where such an underclass develops, it is less likely that absolute poverty will be reduced as market institutions develop and as economic growth occurs. When poverty is feminized, an underclass may also develop that inhibits the elimination of absolute poverty. Racialization and feminization of poverty, however, are strongly affected by access to labor markets. In the transition from socialist redistribution to capitalist markets, the historical legacy of socialism may provide some advantages for women on the labor market, at the same time it disadvantaged the Roma. These historically specific attributes of markets are missed by both the institutionalist and the neoclassical economists.

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